

Take On Me by flippyspoon

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Summary:

Title has nothing to do with anything lol. So somebody prompted me with cheek kisses about a million years ago so here ya go.

Take On Me

They had been friends for a while before it started happening and then it just kept happening.

Billy initiated the kissing on the cheek.

The first time was at a basketball game; Hawkins vs. Carterville. It was a decent rivalry between the two teams and the game had been intense but both Billy and Steve had played like champs and won for Hawkins. In the ensuing hub-hub of jubilation, everyone cheering and slapping them on the back in the middle of the court, Steve had grinned at Billy, up close and squeezing his arm. Billy, dazed with the feeling of something *good* had leaned over and grabbed Steve and sloppily kissed him on the cheek. It was a buddy kind of kiss, a “joking” kind of kiss that somehow didn’t have to mean anything and could easily be done in front of anyone. Steve had laughed and howled his joy and then they’d both gone to the party at Vicky’s afterwards and nothing had felt awkward or weird. After that it became a thing that Billy just did sometimes in a moment of particular exuberance; after other games or if Steve did well on a test he’d been stressing about, and then after Billy learned about monsters he’d smack his lips on Steve’s cheek following an especially exciting takedown of a demo-whatever. Steve knew Billy was gay, that had spilled out while they were both high and feeling confessional one night at the quarry. But Steve didn’t even think of the kisses like that. They were just between friends.

The first time Steve kissed Billy on the cheek changed the game just a little bit.

Billy had told Steve he would meet him at Mario's Pizza where he was dropping off Max who was meeting Lucas for a slice and a sundae the evening before his birthday. Steve walked up to Billy's car just as Max was getting out and she tossed him a wave. She looked especially pretty, her fiery hair french-braided, and she wore a denim skirt and a soft blue sweater. She was carrying a small gift-wrapped box. Steve waved back and peeked into the pizza place and saw Lucas light up as Max walked in. It was particularly cute when Lucas saw him and ducked his head and rolled his eyes as if caught by his dad. Steve snorted at that and spun around to slip into the Camaro with Billy.

"Hey!" Steve said.

"Hola," Billy said, smiling wryly.

"Max looks nice," Steve said.

"She better," Billy said, huffing a little. "I braided her damn hair because she wouldn't stop bitching and moaning about what to do with it."

Steve stared at him. "You...braided her hair."

"Yeah, that was after I helped her make that stupid bracelet she's giving Sinclair." Billy shook his head as if this was the trial of his life. "Punk better like that thing."

"You braided Max's hair," Steve said slowly. "And you helped her make a bracelet that she's giving to Lucas."

"She wouldn't stop whining!" Billy was sitting back in his seat, aviators perched on his nose, looking careless as anything and he glanced at Steve who was grinning almost apologetically as if he were quite aware of something Billy was just not yet ready to admit. Billy threw up his hands vaguely. "What?"

Steve leaned over and gave Billy a wet kiss on the cheek with an exaggerated smack of his lips. Billy blushed unmistakably but under his aviators he only betrayed himself by smiling a little.

"Whatever, Harrington," Billy said.

"Where're we eating?" Steve said, still grinning as he sat back in his seat.

"Anywhere but here."

"I'm buying."

"Obviously."

The first time Billy kissed Steve when it meant something was after a bonfire in a clearing not far from Steve's house. Billy had been having a rough week and he'd driven himself to the party but by midnight he was hammered and around two o'clock Steve had his arm around Billy's waist, Billy's arm slung around Steve's shoulders as Steve dragged him to his house.

"My blood runs *cold*," Billy sang, nowhere in the vicinity of on key. "My memoryyy has just been sold!"

"Okay, buddy," Steve said, as they staggered through the woods. "Whoa, careful." Steve steered them around a small boulder that Billy had nearly fallen over in the dark and Billy laughed.

"Veeery sharp, Harrington," Billy slurred. "You're very quick, ya know."

"No one's ever said that to me before," Steve said dryly.

"I mean light...like light on your feet," Billy said, turning his head to frown at Steve as they walked. "But you're not a dummy. Anybody says Sssteve Harrington's s-sstupid, I'mma beat em' up!"

"What if I say so?"

"Then I'mma beat you up."

"Okay, buddy."

"I'm *joking*. I would never."

"No, I know," Steve said, chuckling. "Jesus."

"*I'm* stupid," Billy said, now sounding comically forlorn.

Steve only snorted a laugh and squeezed Billy's shoulder. "What're you talking about? Your GPA is ridiculous."

"I beat you up," Billy said, sticking out his bottom lip. "That was stupid. I beat you up so bad. I'm so sorry I beat you up so bad."

"Oh, here we go," Steve said sighing. "You're never really wasted until you're crying about beating me up a million years ago."

"Wasn't that long ago," Billy said darkly.

"Feels like forever," Steve muttered.

"I wouldn't beat you up if I'd known you'd be my best buddy," Billy said, shaking his head, though it swerved funny because he was drunk, rolling around on his neck and bumping Steve.

"Well, isn't that sweet," Steve said, but it *was* sort of sweet and not the sort of thing Billy would never say sober, and Steve squeezed Billy's waist a little tighter.

"You're the best friend I ever had," Billy said, and stopped cold there in the woods. He was breathing too deliberately as drunk people do and it was loud in the woods as he stared at Steve. "The *best* friend."

"I mean..." Steve swallowed and nodded his head. "Same here, man. Really."

Billy grinned at that, tongue through his teeth and eyes glittering and Steve laughed a little just from the sheer charm of Billy when he was being genuine.

"Thanks, gorgeous." Billy had kissed Steve on the cheek so many times and now he threw an arm around Steve's neck and laid one on him, dangerously near his mouth. It was wet and boozy and loud but Steve's face felt as if it had burst into flame and his heart thumped loud in his chest. He laughed again, nervous this time, and his mind

raced as they walked on and Steve couldn't stop thinking about it all the way into his house where he made Billy drink a lot of water and then coffee. Was it because Billy was being sentimental? And kind of cute and sweet? Steve was not above admitting to *himself* that he had fantasized about Billy, but he kept that separate. Fantasies didn't mean anything.

That night he started to wonder.

The next time Steve kissed Billy on the cheek was not for weeks after the bonfire.

Steve was in love with Billy.

He knew that now. He thought Billy might be in love with him except that Billy was so bold, surely he would have said something or made a real move. Someone more observant might have noted that Billy was often afraid even if he pretended like he wasn't and that he considered Steve too important to risk losing, but Steve wasn't that more observant person.

They were out hunting monsters one night. The Gate was closed but "porous" (apparently) and this meant the occasional troublesome creature (or several) hopping through.

Steve was light on his feet after all, but Billy was not and so did not move fast enough away from the demogorgon, nor were his feet planted enough to resist that type of strength, and Steve watched his future get slammed hard against a tree. That was the feeling he had, he thought later. He remembered being primally terrified for Nancy when he had fought beside her, but now his own life flashed before his eyes as Billy's was threatened, as if there was some cord of living between them attached to their hearts and if Billy died it would snap and kill Steve too. They had been in battle like this before and both had been hurt here or there, but there was something particularly brutal about the way the thing threw Billy against the tree and Steve

realized later it was because Billy had told him in some late night intimate talk or other how his father would throw him against a wall, how it rattled his bones.

It felt oddly like a matter of self-preservation as he drove forward and swung the bat with more force than he had ever managed and about took the thing's head off at the third hit, Billy now on the ground and staggering to his feet before he grabbed his axe and finished the job.

They stood in the cold clear night, the big ugly thing dead at their feet, and the sound of their own panting and the music of crickets nearby.

"Billy." Steve dropped his bat and nearly tripped getting to Billy who was staring blankly at the ground. "You okay?"

Billy nodded absently. "Yeah. Uh huh."

"Yeah?" Steve rested his hands on Billy's shoulders, examined Billy's face half visible in moonlight. "Sure?"

Billy shook himself a little, as if just returning to his body. "Shit. I did not like that. *Shit*."

"Yeah, I wouldn't think so. Your back's okay and everything? Could have broken ribs or some shit."

"Nah, it just...knocked the wind outta me." Billy tilted his head and gave Steve a long look. "Hey, it's nothing to cry about. Take more'n that to bring this fucker down."

"Right." Steve rolled his eyes but was somewhat satisfied and he wasn't really think as he slung his arm around Billy's shoulders and tugged him over, kissing him on the cheek. It was not wet or sloppy at all, but soft and sweet. "Don't let that happen again, dumbass," Steve said.

It was a different kind of kiss, not so much like something joking buddies would do but more like what a couple would do. Steve felt the tension in Billy's shoulders for the briefest moment before he relaxed again, perhaps deciding to, and they were picked up their weapons.

“Not planning on it, dipshit,” Billy said.

That was that. They returned to the Camaro and went to Dairy Queen for dinner, but Steve didn't take his arm from around Billy's shoulders until they were safe in the car. Later, as Billy waved a french fry around while expounding on why *Knight Rider* made no sense, his eyes alive and bright and half-grinning because he was making Steve laugh, a thought unfurled itself in big bold letters: *I can never be without him.*

Only a few days after the incident with the demogorgon, Billy and Steve found themselves hanging out at the Byers' house where the horde of middle-schoolers was inside hotly debating D&D strategies while scarfing down the last of the pizza, Cyndi Lauper blasting from the radio. It never failed to occur to Steve, when he found himself at the Byers in a non-monster-fighting related context, how much warmer the shabby place was next to his own big fancy house.

Billy and Steve had retired to the front porch to sit on the front step, perhaps unnecessarily close, and smoke. If Steve could think of nothing but Billy's denim-clad thigh warm against his own, he thought he did a pretty good job of not letting on even as he occasionally glanced over at Billy with delighted eyes because Billy had said something especially surprising or funny.

“Billy!” That was Max. Steve had just been about to ask Billy something just to get him rambling again but now Max and Eleven were sitting down on either side of them. Max had a pad of paper and a marker in her hand, her lips pursed as Eleven watched, looking equally serious.

“Play MASH,” Max demanded.

“What?” Billy snapped. “I'm not playing that stupid girl game-”

“Billyyy,” Max whined. “I’m just showing Jane. I need an example so she can do mine.”

“C’mon, jackass,” Steve said, elbowing him.

“Ugh fine.” Billy lit himself a cigarette and Max perked up.

“Okay, name three dream cars,” Max said.

“Ugh. Alright. Ferrari, any year,” Billy said flatly as Max scribbled his answers. “And...an ‘84 Camaro.”

“You *have* a Camaro,” Steve said.

“I’d like an ‘84 to keep it company,” Billy said without missing a beat.

“Whatever.”

“And a Porsche Speedster.”

“Not a Spyder?” Steve said, nudging him. “Much cooler than the Speedster.”

“I *like* the Speedster,” Billy said. “Why do you always fuckin’ argue when I talk about cars-”

“The Spyder’s way sexier,” Steve said. “Like a ‘55 Spyder.”

“*Fine*,” Billy said. “And a Spyder for the lady.”

Steve punched him in the shoulder. “Dick.”

“Three places to go on your honeymoon,” Max said.

“Ugh. Jesus, I dunno. Max, this is boring,” Billy grouched.

“Italy,” Steve said. “Hawaii. And...Australia”

“*Australia?*”

“That’s where they send the criminals, right?” Steve said, smirking.

Billy punched him in the shoulder. "Dick."

"Three numbers!" Max said, clearly a little impatient with the banter.

"Seven fourteen sixty-six," Billy said.

"That's my birthday," Steve said.

Billy shrugged.

"And three girls," Max said. "Oh...girls?"

"Oh, like it matters," Billy said. "It's goddamn *MASH*. Uh...I dunno. Brooke Shields and fuckin'...Christie Brinkley and..." Billy cackled and said, "Steve Harrington."

"*What?*" Steve said.

"They said girls," Billy said, all innocence.

"Fuck you," Steve said, not looking at all angry. He punched Billy's shoulder again and Billy punched back and then they were laughing and smacking each other until Max loudly cleared her throat.

"*Okay*," Max said, and started drawing a spiral in the middle of her MASH box. "Tell me when to stop."

Billy waited about three seconds and said, "Stop."

Eleven was watching over all of this looking by turns amused and baffled. Billy smoked as Max counted around the MASH box, and he occasionally glanced at Steve who smiled back and then looked away, biting his lip.

"*Okay*," Max said. "You...live in an apartment...and you have a Spyder-"

"Ha!" Steve said.

"And sixty-six children-"

"*Shit*," Billy said.

"And you went on a honeymoon to Hawaii and you're married to...Steve! Ha!" Max grinned at them and abruptly the easy ribbing had ceased and both Billy and Steve looked flustered suddenly as Steve scratched his chin, attempting to hide his pink cheeks, and Billy shrugged, staring down at his knee.

"Stupid game," Billy mumbled.

"Yeah," Steve said.

"It's nice," Eleven said firmly. "You *should* be married."

Max snorted a laugh and Eleven looked between them, slightly confused. "They're so happy together."

"Ooookay okay!" Steve said. "Off you kids go now. We're gonna smoke and be evil out here."

"Yeah, real evil," Max snarked, getting to her feet and leading Eleven back into the house.

"So if we have Harrington money," Billy said, stubbing out cigarette, "why are we living in an apartment?"

"I'm guessing those sixty-six kids have something to do with it," Steve said.

"Yeah, well that's definitely your fault," Billy said. "Kids follow you around like fuckin' ducklings."

"Hey, I can't help it. It just happens," Steve said, chuckling, and they stared each other for a pregnant moment, not uncomfortably but only enjoying the company until Billy leaned over as if he couldn't quite help himself and kissed Steve's cheek.

Steve held him there, his hand palming the back of Billy's neck as his lips pressed to Steve's cool skin, and the energy shifted as Billy let himself be held close now and all but nuzzled Steve whose short breaths he could hear and feel. They couldn't hide from the moment and Billy leaned back a little and Steve's fingers were brushing his cheek and Steve's forehead rested against Billy's.

"*Billy.*"

“Ah...”

The swell of Steve’s heart threatened to choke him and the clatter of something falling to the floor in the house followed by a shout disrupted the moment and they were parted just as Dustin came running out the front door, shouting Steve’s name because of some debate he was meant to referee. But his wide eyes stayed on Billy, his mouth opening and closing just the way it did in class when he didn’t know the answer. Dustin was talking, nobody heard him.

“Wait...” Steve muttered. Dustin was yanking on his hand.

“We’ll catch up later,” Billy said.

“Shit.”

The *best* time Steve kissed Billy on the cheek came after Neil Hargrove kicked his son out of the house. Billy had explained this to Steve, while glaring down at his hands, mortified by his own helplessness as he leaned on the Camaro, packed with his stuff.

Steve declared Billy would move into his house almost before Billy had finished his sentence.

Steve’s parents were kind of jerks, but his mother was prone to a guilt complex and Steve played her like a Gibson. Soon enough Billy was lugging his stuff into the Harrington’s part-time guestroom as Steve tried very hard to pretend he wasn’t delighted because Billy was being stoic.

They had not talked about what happened at the Byers’; the intimate moment between them having become the *new* thing that had happened at the Byers’ that was difficult to talk about.

Steve couldn’t stop talking about everything else though.

“And, ya know, you can use the pool anytime. And just eat what you

want. Except my mom's avocados. She gets pissed. Or my dad's muesli. Not that you'd be psyched to eat muesli. Um. And...you got your own bathroom. And I made the bed up for you, you don't need bedding stuff. And the dresser's cleaned out..." Steve was rocking on his heels. Billy had dropped his stuff in the guestroom and followed Steve into his room. Billy stood, hands in his pockets, watching Steve vibrate with nervous energy.

"I know..." Steve licked his lips and said, "I know you're really upset. But I can't help but be happy you're away from that asshole. To tell you the truth. And I can't help but be happy you're here with me."

It was the closest either of them had come to talking about *it* and Billy looked up sharply.

"I'm not upset he kicked me out," Billy said. "Not like I didn't know you'd come sweeping in and save the day anyway, Harrington."

"Then why..." Steve stared at him, as if trying to read what Billy wouldn't say. "Oh... You don't feel the same way as me... After the Byers, after that...the way you kissed me-

"Jesus, stop," Billy said, his voice cracking a little. "'Course, I feel the same. Christ."

"Then why-

"I can't fuck this up," Billy said in a rush. "Look, I'm as shocked as you are that I give a shit but you're the best friend I've ever had, okay, and if I fucked this up and you hated me, I'd..." He shook his head and dropped his eyes. Steve took the opportunity to step in close and he didn't miss the way Billy's chest rose and fell more quickly as he closed the distance between them.

"Well, that's a problem for me," Steve said quietly. "'Cause see, I'm in love with you."

Billy breathed in at that and said, "I...I am too, asshole. But...what if..."

"You won't fuck it up," Steve said and he reached to cradle Billy's head in his palms and Billy's hands gripped his arms, blessedly

holding him there instead of pushing him away. "I'll keep you in line," Steve said, smirking a little.

"Steve..."

Steve every so slowly kissed Billy's left cheek and then his right cheek and then he waited until Billy made the last leap and tipped his chin up to kiss Steve's mouth. Steve had known it would be good, but he'd been thinking more about the significance and not the sensation and now he lost himself in Billy's lips and his hands slid down Billy's face to clutch at his chest and he made a startled happy noise at the feel of Billy's tongue on his and felt Billy's laugh in his chest and was sure he was floating then.

"Gonna keep me in line, huh, Harrington?" Billy said, and he smiled now and bit his lip, bumping his forehead gently against Steve's.

"Hell yeah," Steve said. "Have to if we're gonna be raising sixty-six kids."